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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

MEPI PLEASE PASS TO LAURA SCHULZ

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#) [DEMOCRATIC REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: TAIZ NGOS SEEK INCREASED COOPERATION WITH USG

1. (U) Summary. On November 16, emboffs visited the city of Taiz to meet with local NGOs to discuss the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) and Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) programs. During the two-hour meeting, emboffs and visiting MEPIoff fielded questions and comments on MEPI and heard opinions on how MEPI and post could better aid Yemeni NGOs. End Summary.

A Call For More Cooperation

2. (U) On November 16, emboffs and MEPI program officer met with NGO representatives in Taiz to discuss the DAD and MEPI programs. The meeting, sponsored by the Taiz-based Human Rights and Information Training Center (HRITC), attracted over 70 participants from area NGOs, political parties, newspapers, professional societies, and universities. After a brief report on the DAD, discussion turned to MEPI and to USG relations with Yemeni civil society.

3. (U) Many participants asked detailed questions about MEPI's grant-making process. Others consistently called on post to increase its cooperation with and attention to Taiz-based NGOs. Rahma Saleh, a teacher at the National Institute and a party activist with the ruling General People's Congress (GPC), urged post to expand its efforts beyond the capital, noting that NGOs in Taiz are also active and need assistance. Abd al-Hamid Sultan, from the Yemeni Studies Center, added that until the USG runs MEPI in an "organized and balanced manner" it will not enjoy true partnership with Yemeni civil society. Many participants suggested that cooperation could increase if post and MEPI increased communication with them. PolChief responded by promising to disseminate information on post activities and MEPI programming more widely.

More Than Political Reform

4. (U) Participants also urged MEPI to expand its programming, which they felt has been limited to democratic development. Abdul-Aziz Sultan, a consultant with the Ministry of Education and head of the Taiz Teachers' Syndicate, noted that education is a primary local concern. "We need help assessing and identifying our weak educational methods," he said, "but so far we have been unable to identify partners or programs to help us." Mohammed al-Ariqi, Director of Youth Activities at Taiz University, added that Taiz needs help with wastewater management. MEPIoff replied by describing MEPI's educational and economic reform pillars and inviting NGOs with relevant programs to apply for small grants and, through Standing Program Announcements, for funding to support larger projects. Econ/Comoff added that the USG, in cooperation with the World Bank, recently funded a Taiz Water Authority assessment project to expand Taiz's wastewater management network.

Other Highlights

5. (U) Other highlights of the two-hour meeting included an appeal by Dr. Abdul-Jalil al-Zuraiqi, Secretary General of the Taiz Medical Doctors' Syndicate (known for its opposition to the ROYG), to help protect NGOs that accept USG grants, since the ROYG and government-controlled media commonly portray them as "foreign agents." Another participant with the Yemeni Socialist Party, in the one instance of political grandstanding, warned the panel that no matter what they do, USG policy in Palestine and Iraq will overshadow any progress with civil society.

6. (SBU) Comment. Although the DAD was on the agenda, it was clear that the participants were more interested in MEPI grants. Notable was how every participant's comments were accompanied by a call to increase contacts with his or her NGO. In Taiz, emboffs found a sophisticated and eager NGO community. In fact, many Yemenis claim that Taiz, the intellectual capital of Yemen, has a more developed NGO community than Sanaa. It is evident that increased MEPI and

post efforts to reach out to Taiz NGOs would advance Yemeni political and economic reform. As a result of this meeting's success, post plans to increase its outreach efforts to other cities in the near future. End Comment.
Krajeski